

same description. The soil being then exhausted for about fifteen years, he proceeds to cut down a fresh patch and subject it to a similar process.

It requires the greatest care and attention on the part of the Government Agents and the headmen to prevent constant encroachments on the forests. In too many cases the headmen connive; in some they are themselves implicated; and it requires unceasing vigilance on the part of the Government Agents to resist a system to which the natives are, from their disposition and character, attached, and which is in some cases a necessity, and must be admitted to a large degree.

The natives are attached to it because, whereas the rice crop is not more than ten-fold, they obtain forty-fold from kurakkan on young chena, and even five-hundred-fold from old and rich forest, together with the second crop. It suits their indolent habits, because, whereas paddy cultivation requires work and attention, chena is the easiest and laziest cultivation. The seed once thrown in the ground, nothing more remains than to surround the patch with fence-sticks till it grows up, and in the meantime they can loll about the village in idleness.

It is for this miserable cultivation that the finest and most valuable timber has been exterminated. The larger and older the timber, the more irresistible is the desire to fell it.

It is a wretched system in every respect, as bad for the cultivator as for the Government. It confirms his natural laziness and indifference. It discourages any attempts at permanent improvement by draining, clearing, and manuring; a close, unhealthy jungle takes the place of open forest. It interferes with paddy cultivation; chenas are cleared at the time of the year when the tanks should be repaired and the bunds exposed and strengthened—that is, at the dry season. They have to be fenced just when the paddy fields should be watched and watered.

On the other hand, as said before, this chena is in some cases a necessity. In the great and neglected district of Nuwaraklawiya, in which stands the city of Anurādhapura, there are 1,574 villages and 1,600 tanks. Not one tank has a proper sluice, and in some seasons the villagers are unable to obtain water except for a very small portion of their land. “Give us water, and then you can speak to us about chena,” is their universal language to me in my journeys.

In all the Central Province chena is admitted on certain recognized principles. Every paddy field has attached to it a piece of high land, technically known as its appurtenance, and no proof is required to establish a private right to this appurtenance, which is in ordinary cases in the proportion of three to one to the mud land; that is, a paddy field of two acres would be allowed an appurtenance of six acres of high land. In some districts where the chenas are poor, a larger extent is given. No objection whatever exists to these appurtenances, nor to the cultivation of chena on Crown land by license, care being taken that no encroachment is allowed on land containing valuable timber. A certain amount of chena is necessary for the occasional cultivation of fine grain, for fence-sticks and small wood for agricultural purposes, and for the pasture of cattle.

But the subject is embroiled by constant encroachments beyond the legitimate appurtenance, and by claims against the Crown—some fraudulent, some legitimate.

I have therefore considered it necessary to take this chena question seriously up, and by appointing surveyors solely for the work, to have claims defined, examined into, and settled, and appurtenances marked out. I trust, though considerable time must elapse before the completion of this work, that each year will see it on a better footing.

As irrigation is extended, chena will be checked and reduced. In the Eastern Province, where paddy cultivation has been so greatly extended, chena is almost entirely forbidden, and it is a remarkable fact that when you enter the Eastern Province from the Northern, the boundary is defined by the fine and valuable forest on the one side and the low jungle on the other. I have also made it a point of impressing on the Government Agents the necessity of warning their headmen that future encroachments on valuable forest land will be punished with severity.

Secondly, the absence of all system in cutting timber in the Crown forests.

The plan hitherto pursued of felling timber has been extremely defective. The timber trader applies for a license to cut a certain number of logs. He is supposed to be supervised by the headmen, but as the trees are scattered here and there at long distances, no real supervision is exercised, and he is enabled to cut pretty well as he likes, and to stow away the trees until an opportunity arrives for their removal. I mentioned in my Address to the Legislative Council last year, that in the Trincomalee district alone the timber which was fraudulently cut and hidden in the jungle, but which was discovered by large rewards being offered, sufficed to supply the wants of the timber trade in the Eastern Province during the year 1872.

Nor is that all. The wasteful mode of cutting the timber is lamentable. The tree is allowed to fall without any precaution or previous lopping, and brings destruction to all the saplings within its reach. One log is perhaps cut out, and the rest of the tree, most valuable timber, is left to rot.

This is not so bad as the destruction caused by chena, for the forest recovers itself, and though the Government loses the royalty on the timber fraudulently appropriated, still it is not converted into ashes, but is applied to use.

All this has been going on for years, and no care has been taken to replant the forest so cut down; the consequence is, that all valuable timber has disappeared from the most accessible parts of the Island, and that a country preeminently fitted for the growth of every kind of valuable tropical timber—teak included—has been reduced to the condition of having to import the very article which it is most fitted to produce.